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ABSTRACT

Homelessness affects people of all backgrounds, races, and religions. Whether the number of homeless people is 300,000 or 3 million, as some estimates claim, there are too many people in America who struggle to find shelter daily, making homelessness one of the most serious problems facing the nation today. This discussion, designed for the education of young readers, explores the causes of homelessness, the problems homeless people face, and what can be done about homelessness. The reality is that fewer than 6 percent of the homeless choose that lifestyle; most of the homeless are victims of circumstances beyond their control. The homeless include men, women, and children, but about 25 percent of the homeless are mentally ill. The homeless are among the least threatening people in the country, and are far more likely to be victims of crime than to be criminals. Although President Clinton has called homelessness the nation's most embarrassing social problem, the government has yet to come up with successful ways to help the homeless. Some private efforts are having success on a limited scale, and these programs provide some hope for addressing the problems of homelessness. A list of six organizations for further information is given to encourage the young reader to find out more about the problem. (Contains a glossary and 10 references.) (SLD)

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